



# MAGIC FOR SMILES 2019—HIGHLIGHTS

## SUMMARY

- Magic for Smiles was registered in March 2019 in the UK as a charity, after three years of pilot work in Lebanon. In 2019 we focused on work in the region, Turkey and Jordan rather than Lebanon. All are countries with among the highest per capita refugee population (roughly 1 in 20 in Turkey, 1 in 10 in Jordan and 1 in 4 in Lebanon). In addition to Syrians and Palestinians, Jordan in particular hosts other refugees including Yemenis and Iraqis.
- In 2019, 72 events were held mostly magic shows but in latter months a switch was made to focus more on tuition. Amongst the 72, there were 8 shows and talks in the UK designed for fundraising.
- During 2019, MFS engaged with 25 new organisations, of which 13 were in Turkey and 10 in Jordan. Most promising longer term partnerships come from those also engaged in tuition programming as well as magic shows and testimonies are being gathered.
- High level networking in the humanitarian and magic fields has been a theme of the last year at international conferences to try to promote magic as tool for psychosocial support.
- Given the MFS is now a charity it can apply for grants – so far one grant has been given totaling £4365 and crowdfunding to the tune of £10,270 was raised – from the total income of £14,641 all was spent and covered mostly expenses rather than work-days.



Wonder of magic Palestinian & Jordanian children, Resife, Amman, Jordan – STEPS (and partner JHHB)

## MEDIA

Media coverage and interviews increased, prompted in part by being based in the UK. [Huffington Post](#), [BBC uncovers](#), [BBC South Today](#), [Radio Oxford](#), [Oxford Mail](#), and [BBC video](#). Most recently in September 2019, Magic for Smiles was featured in the [Guardian](#), and in the [60 Seconds](#) summary with a focus on Jamie Balfour-Paul and the benefits of humanitarian magic

## NEW ORGANISATIONS - 2019:

**13 in Turkey** – Support to Life, Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants, Small Projects Istanbul, Qnushyo,, Concern Worldwide, Sirkhane (circus), IHH, Human Resources Development Foundation, , Active Child Centre, Yusra, Yuva. Multecilier (Refugee Association), Istanbul & I

**10 in Jordan** – Steps (4 partners), Help Refugees (Hope Centre and Azraq schools), One Love Jordan, MSF Amman and Irbid, Alliance Church, Philadelphia Church, Good Shepherd School (Iraqis), Blumont, Save the Children, CARE.

**2 in Lebanon** – Borderless, Nabad (January 2019)

## BENEFITS OF MAGIC

### – BUILDING THE EVIDENCE:

- MFS continues to promote magic as a tool for psychosocial support that promotes the wellbeing of vulnerable traumatised children. To this end it has published a summary research document on the [rationale](#) behind the use of magic in this way. This separates out the benefits into three categories emotional (happiness, sense of wonder, de-stressing), cognitive (imagination, analysis, concentration) and social (interaction, self-confidence, trust building, friendship).
- Benefits are strengthened by repeat exposure to magic though one-off exposure remains impactful. Added to this, tuition is especially beneficial in areas of self-confidence and self-esteem due to the emphasis on performance. Evidence is collected with every intervention evaluated.
- Most of the organisations worked with in the last year run psychosocial programmes – unstructured or recreational more than structured - within child protection, education, health of other programmes.

## EMOTIONAL: Happiness, sense of wonder and de-stressing:

With the Syria conflict in its ninth year many refugees from Syria know nothing except life in camps or poverty and stress, are traumatised themselves, or absorb the levels of trauma they hear from their parents. Refugees from Yemen and Iraq, especially present in Jordan, also suffer the consequences of war like Syrian children, and in many cases more recently.



Loving the magic, mainly Sudanese children, Amman Jordan  
- Collateral Repair Project



Thankful Iraqi children after the show  
- Good Shepherd School, Amman, Jordan



Syrian children clap for joy, Gaziantep, Turkey  
- Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants



Flying Carpet festival for (mostly Kurdish) Turkish and Syrians, Nusaybin, Mardin, SE Turkey  
- *Sirkhane*



Syrian children with magic puppet Tiko Sirkeci, SE Turkey  
- *Concern*



Syrian girl talks on the benefits of magic, Zaatari camp, Jordan  
- *Save the Children*

## COGNITIVE: Imagination, concentration, analysis

Even with one-off exposure the experience of magic can have impact for a long time acting as a reference point for analysis and discussion. Impact on concentration and analysis levels is self-evident with relatively undisciplined children becoming unusually focused. Measuring impact on levels of imagination is difficult but the life injected into children experiencing magic is a good indicator.



Transfused Palestinian & Jordanian children, El Hussein camp, Amman, Jordan - *STEPS*



Wonder and concentration amidst Syrian children, Amman, Jordan  
- *Collateral Repair Project*



## SOCIAL: Interaction, trust-building, friendship, self-confidence

Perhaps the most uplifting aspect of magic for the performer/trainer is seeing the levels of interaction enabled by the exposure. The enthusiasm to participate is infectious and often well beyond normal levels of participation. While all tricks have varied or general impacts, some have the greatest utility in passing messages around trust and friendship building in a visual and fun way – for example trusting that a balloon will not pop when pierced with a needle. Similarly, when six different coloured circles of rope magically become one, messaging on friendship is enabled, especially applicable to social cohesion programmes.



Palestinian girl Gaza camp, Amman  
- *STEPS (Nadi el Yarmouk)*



Syrians Hatay close to Syrian border, Turkey  
- *Support to Life*

## TUITION

Tuition offers many emotional and cognitive benefits, but clearly triggers social benefits as well especially self-confidence. One or two 2 hour sessions are provided for up to 12 children 11-13 years old with a third of time devoted to performance. Two partner staff are also trained to ensure a ratio of 1:3 trainer to child, and to help in follow up. In Turkey an experienced volunteer magician also often joins.



*Happy Syrian girl thinking hard, Istanbul- Qnushyo*



*Syrians & Turkish children, Istanbul - ASAM*



*Syrian children, Istanbul - Support to Life*

## NETWORKING AND FUNDRAISING EVENTS:

High level networking opportunities occurred in the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support International Conference spearheaded by Minister Sigrid Kaag of Netherlands. Also at the Global Salzburg Seminar in Education for Refugees and Migrants, and in various schools and at the annual convention of the International Brotherhood of Magicians.



*With Minister Sigrid Kaag*



*Fundraising at Barnfield, Exeter*



*Talk at International Brotherhood of Magicians*

## WAY FORWARD

- MFS will continually build up the evidence base on the benefits of magic in PSS (although impact is self-evident). A research institute has not yet been found but discussions are ongoing. In house evaluations of each intervention exist as does anecdotal evidence and testimonies which will be built upon. Sustained partnerships are underway.
- MFS has one small grant under its belt and largely relies on crowdfunding with self-financing. The funding outlook and therefore management capacity is a challenge, but more investment in fundraising is essential.
- Building in-country capacity will be a priority. Progress has been made in Turkey by working with a volunteer magician and training of partner staff in magic tuition. In country capacity in Jordan needs to be tapped.



*After show with YUVA, Kirachan, Turkey*

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Established in early 2016, [Magic for Smiles](http://www.magicforsmiles.com) was set up to provide magic entertainment and support for and with vulnerable children, especially but not only refugees, in Lebanon and later in Turkey and Jordan. Jamie Balfour-Paul is the founder and uses the stage name Jamie Jibberish due to extensive use of nonsense or magic language.